

Transcript & Audio Recording of Wes Maynard's Bi-annual Presentation to JFAC in Behalf of the Council

Every other year, the Council has an opportunity to present to the Joint Finance-Appropriations Committee (JFAC). This is a chance for us to educate legislators about the mission of the Council and explain budget requests.

On Friday, January 19, 2007, Wes Maynard presented to JFAC and fielded questions for about 20 minutes. This year, we requested additional funds to cover a new full-time position called a Community Resource Development Specialists along with more money to operate our programs.

Word-for-Word Transcription:

**This presentation was not read from a piece of paper; it was an extemporaneous presentation. This is a word-for-word, literal transcription.*

Chairman Bell:

"We had you scheduled for 15 minutes and we've run into your time, but you feel free to take your 15 minutes please."

Wes Maynard:

"Thank you. Good morning Madam Chairman."

Chairman Bell:

"Good morning."

Wes Maynard:

"Committee members, I really appreciate the opportunity to be here with you today. For the record, I'm Wes Maynard. I'm the Executive Director of the Idaho Council for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing.

To give you a brief historical context, about 14 years ago, some concerned citizens and stakeholders and professionals got together and they realized that there was no centralized State agency to work on systemic changes for deaf and hard-of-hearing people. So they started out by forming a task force; they lobbied the legislature and the Governor's Office, and successfully they started the Council for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing. And I represent right now to you the deaf community and our staff members.

And I'd like to start by saying thank you for continuing to fund the Council for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing as it fills a fills a very unique and important role in our State government.

We, in Idaho, have 150,000 hard-of-hearing people. We have 3,500 deaf people. Among these deaf and hard-of-hearing people, we have about five very

unique populations or subsets of the major population: there are deaf people; there are hard-of-hearing people; late-deafened adults (those who lose their hearing later in life); people who are deaf-blind; and people who are multiply disabled. So as you can tell, each of these sub populations have very different needs, and they need different types of services.

We have a nine, governor-appointed board (we have nine, governor-appointed board members) in our Council. Our chairman is deaf and he is in the audience today, and I thank him for being with us. We also have 11 ex-officio members who represent various State agencies, such as the State Department of Education, the Idaho School for the Deaf and the Blind, Health & Welfare, Vocational Rehab, etc.

I would go so far as to say that, in terms of geographical and philosophical diversity, our board is almost perfect. We are very fortunate to have some of Idaho's most prominent experts in deafness and deaf education on our board.

We have a whopping staff of two people [humor]: we have our great administrative assistant, Cindy Schreiner, in the office, and myself. And we also run a temporary federal grant whereby we're able to screen newborns in hospitals. And we have two part-time contractors that receive federal funding, and one part-time employee.

So, again, the purpose of our Council is to work on systemic changes.

We have about five primary statutory responsibilities:

1. Number one responsibility is to increase awareness. We receive hundreds of phone calls every year, hundreds of inquiries through our Web site or email, etc. We get thousands of hits to our Web site as well – I don't know why because it is probably one of the most boring and bland Web sites you will ever visit in your life (most likely because I created it [humor]); however, it's one of the most rich repositories of information; it acts as a very good centralized clearinghouse for all sorts of information and documents.

We send out a lot of newsletters, brochures. We travel the state and do presentations as well. We also do a fair amount of demographic research so we can keep up on the trends.

2. Our second responsibility is to improve access. Accordingly, we do a lot of outreach to various agencies. As you know, about 15 years ago, the Americans with Disabilities Act was passed through Congress, and there are many implications on agencies and organizations with regard to serving deaf and hard-of-hearing people. So we help them [the agencies] those responsibilities.

We also run a small assistive listening device program where we receive a small grant of about \$4,500 a year. And we help subsidize different types of equipment for lower income deaf and hard-of-hearing individuals.

3. Our third primary responsibility is to advocate for policies and programs. This is where we are kind of a unique agency: on one hand we are a State agency; on the other hand we are also an advocacy organization. And so, accordingly, we introduce legislation, we develop position papers on various topics, we monitor consumer protection.

4. The fourth responsibility we have is to consult and cooperate with other agencies. We sit on about eight different boards of organizations or agencies. We try to cross-pollinate with ideas and work with those agencies that fulfill similar missions.

5. Lastly, we are responsible to submit periodic reports to the Governor, to the legislature, to other policymakers as well.

Every year, the Board gets together and they decide what are three or four major priorities will be. So some of our recent priorities have been the following:

- We were extensively involved in the Idaho Educational Interpreter Act, which was first-time legislation that set minimum standards for K-12 sign language interpreters. This passed last year successfully, and it gives deaf students and hard-of-hearing students some level of guarantee that what their interpreter is interpreting is accurate.
- We also have been fairly involved in deaf education reform. As you may know, Idaho may be going through certain changes with its deaf education system. And so what we've done over the past year is we've researched every state in the nation, we've looked into their delivery models, and we've written a report in which we've outlined certain recommendations of best practices and the like.
- Lastly, we manage the statewide newborn hearing screening program. In Idaho, about 22,000 or 23,000 babies are born every year. And remarkably, with no law to enforce this, our state screens 98% of those babies for their hearing right when they're born. There is equipment these days where it's not the rattling of the key or the banging on the pot. We have electrodes that hook up to these little infants and we're able to tell whether they have a hearing loss within hours after they're born. And that funding is from the federal government that we run that program. That funding will most likely go away in a couple of years – very successful and enjoyable program that we run.

Our current priorities over the next year or so are the following:

- We have two Senate Concurrent Resolutions that we're introducing this session. Those will be in the House...or excuse me...the Senate Education Committee next week.
- We're also continuing to work on improving K-12 educational interpreter training.
- We're continuing to advise, where we can, on deaf education reform issues.
- And, lastly, we're trying to find ways to expand direct services to deaf and hard-of-hearing adults.

If I can just review with you a couple of areas in which we're doing very well in Idaho and one area that we can improve.

We're doing very well with infants and toddlers. We have good infrastructure, we're well funded, we screen almost all the babies – that is going very well.

The education system for the deaf and the hard of hearing, in most instances, is going very well – good infrastructure, well funded.

As a Council, we're working on systemic issues.

But there is one gap that is fairly grossly under funded, and we're working on improving this gap. And that is specialized, direct services to deaf and hard-of-hearing adults. I'm not sure how to express in stronger language the level of frustration among some deaf and hard-of-hearing adults—many who are with us today—about the lack of these types of services in Idaho. And as part of our statute, we're responsible to make these recommendations and identify these gaps. And it's in that spirit that I come to you today.

That leads me to my last slide, which covers our funding request. As you can see, from the State, we receive about \$150,000. From the federal grant, which is temporary, we receive about \$127,000—that's for the newborn hearing screening program.

The bottom line is after we pay the rent for our office space and after we pay our salaries, we have, essentially, about \$16,000 of discretionary funding through which we can operate all of our projects and programs.

Let me illustrate an interesting point to you: we have four Council meetings per year, as we're required to do. For one Council meeting, we have many deaf people who come. We have many deaf board members, including our Chair.

We have to have two interpreters there all day because one interpreter can't go for nine hours straight. We also have a court reporter. Just one day of our Council meeting costs \$1,000 for interpreting services—that's 1/16 of our budget. We have four Council meetings per year. So just for interpreting services, that consumes about 25% of our \$16,000. The remainder is spent on airfare to bring our board members in, a little bit of food for our meetings, and if we're lucky, some extra money for some brochures and some fact sheets to distribute.

So, what we're asking you to approve as a Council is one FTE for a Community Resource Development Specialist. This would require \$49,000 of salary and benefits. Additionally, we are asking for a \$23,000 increase in our Operating budget to assist this individual with his or her responsibilities. This person would most likely be deaf because their main responsibilities would be outreach and direct services to deaf and hard-of-hearing people. So, that person would likely require quite a bit of interpreting services.

The bottom line is we thank you for the funding that we do receive and we are using that funding very well. And we ask you to approve this funding request moving forward.

Madam Chairman, with that, I'd be happy to address any nice comments or easy questions [humor] from the committee members."

Chairman Cameron:

"Mr. Maynard, we're going to shift gears on you [*Note: the chairperson switched in the middle of the presentation*—we've been rotating back and forth a little this morning to try and take care of our needs. And we welcome you to the committee and welcome those that you've brought with you, your guests, and glad that they're hear with us, and I appreciate their presence and the importance of this budget in their lives. So, with that, Mr. Maynard, we will open it up to questions of the committee and see if there's any questions. Representative Henderson..."

Representative Henderson:

"Thank you, Mr. Chairman, just a definition for a novice. It's been before me before I think but I didn't notice—the Council for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing. The question is: is "hard of hearing," is that expressed in certain specific terms? Like vision you could be a 20/40, 20/27. Thank you, that's the question."

Chairman Cameron:

"Mr. Maynard..."

Wes Maynard:

"Mr. Chairman, Representative Henderson, that's a great question—one that we're commonly asked. Yes, there is something called an audiogram in which

audiologists measure a person's hearing loss at different frequencies. And a "hard-of-hearing" person would be a person who had a hearing loss at a level which is not severe to profound but below that. Functionally, many hard-of-hearing people wear hearing aids. And so that boosts their hearing a little bit where they have a different score on the audiogram. But, yes, hearing loss is measured in increments on an audiogram, all the way from a mild loss to a profound loss."

Chairman Cameron:

"Representative Henbest..." *[Note: Representative Henbest is one of the three authors of [House Bill 821](#) from last year, which sought to close ISDB and restructure the deaf education system by July of 2008.]*

Representative Henbest:

"Thank you, Mr. Chairman and Mr. Maynard. Thank you for the report that you published and I received a copy of concerning deaf education reform, and I appreciated understanding the perspective of the Council and the community. I was puzzled by part of the report, so if you don't mind, I'll go ahead and ask you about that. It was something I was unaware of and it referred to, it defines "deaf" with a capital 'D' or a small 'd' and talked about the Deaf culture, and I don't, didn't have an appreciation of that prior, quite frankly, prior to that report. Could you, and I still don't have an understanding of who would be maybe not 'deaf' but would want to participate in a Deaf culture. I was puzzled by that."

Chairman Cameron:

"Mr. Maynard..."

Wes Maynard:

"Mr. Chairman, Representative Henbest, that is an excellent question—I'd love to answer that. Representative, you mentioned capital 'D' Deaf, and that's the first time a lot of people perhaps in this room have heard that. The Deaf community over the decades have gone through quite a great deal of oppression and they have developed a language which is a separate language from English, which is American Sign Language. That's their most treasured cultural asset. And that's a language that they use frequently and it keeps them connected.

A capital 'D' Deaf person would be one who enjoyed associating with the Deaf community, who uses American Sign Language. Perhaps it would be a person who supports the notion of a residential school for the Deaf for inclusion reasons and having a critical mass of students with which to associate and communicate. A capital 'D' Deaf person is someone who strongly advocates for their rights.

There are other 'kinds' of deaf people who may not feel as passionate about American Sign Language. They may be auditory-oral, which means that they may have a Cochlear Implant, they may use hearing aids, and they may work on their speech and listening more than sign language.

So, those two groups have quite different needs.

And so that is what a capital 'D' Deaf person really entails. Does that answer your question?"

Chairman Cameron:

"Representative Henbest..."

Representative Henbest:

"If I could follow up, Mr. Chairman. What I didn't.... Thank you. I sort of had a beginning understanding of that, and that really helped. Is a person who...Mr. Maynard, is a person who is a capital 'D' Deaf necessarily deaf? or again, Representative asked a question about decibel loss. Could they be all over the spectrum in terms of decibel loss or...? I'm familiar with uncorrected vision... or corrected vision loss, you know, being at a certain threshold. What about someone who's deaf and it's not correctable through...?"

Chairman Cameron:

"Mr. Maynard..."

Wes Maynard:

"Mr. Chairman, Representative Henbest, yes, a capital 'D' Deaf person could be a person really who is "hard of hearing," who has a fairly moderate hearing loss, but chooses to associate more with the Deaf community.

This Deaf community does not define itself based on the level of hearing loss. They define themselves by this: *they do not feel they are broken; they do not feel that the hearing world needs to 'fix' them or impose medical solutions. They feel they are whole people and able to do anything and everything that a hearing person can do, except hear.* So, it's more of an attitude and more of an approach to life that: 'I indeed am a complete person with my deafness and I accept it and I embrace it.'"

Chairman Cameron:

"Representative Henbest..."

Representative Henbest:

"It's my final follow up then. This is a tough that you may want to take back to your board before you answer it—it's up to you. As we're struggling with the redesign of how we provide services to children who are deaf within school systems and communities and regions and that sort of thing, which, you know, was the reason for your report, should we... Is it a State budgetary responsibility to meet the needs of the capital 'D' Deaf community members who are not 'deaf?'"

Chairman Cameron:

“Mr. Maynard...”

Wes Maynard:

“Mr. Chairman, Representative Henbest, thank you for asking that question. And I’m perfectly comfortable answering it because the Board has developed this report, which entails the Board’s positions. And they have asked me, as their representative, to discuss that with anyone who wishes.

I’m not the administrator of the Idaho School for the Deaf and the Blind. We work closely with ISDB and we think they are doing an outstanding job.

In our research, we found that there are five major types of students who are deaf or hard of hearing:

1. Those who are capital ‘D’ Deaf who need a residential component—residential school with a critical mass of students where they can socialize, because that certainly is a major component of education, as we know. They can have sports; they can have student government; they are taught by people who understand their language.
2. We also identified a group of deaf individuals—students—who are perfectly comfortable mainstreaming. They need qualified interpreters. They need local support so that they can succeed in that environment.
3. We also identified a group of students whose parents have chosen for them to be auditory-oral. Maybe they have a Cochlear Implant. We need specialized, auditory-oral programs to support these parents and to support these students so that they can succeed. We do have those types of programs. They need to continue to be improved, as well as other programs in Idaho.
4. We also have hard-of-hearing students, who just need a hearing aid and a little bit of extra attention and consultation with audiologists every once in a while, who are mainstreamed.
5. Lastly, we have multiply disabled students who have very extensive needs and who need a high level of service—*not* in a hospital institution but in an environment like a residential school for the deaf.

So, to answer your question, yes, it is the Council’s position that we need a *full* spectrum of placement and communication options so we make sure that we don’t miss any of these five populations.”

Representative Henbest:

“Thank you.”

Wes Maynard:

"You're welcome."

Chairman Cameron:

"Senator Werk..."

Senator Werk:

"Mr. Chairman, my question has been asked and answered."

Chairman Cameron:

"Representative Ringo..."

Representative Ringo:

"Mine as well. Thank you, Mr. Chairman."

Chairman Cameron:

"I don't see any further questions. Mr. Maynard, thank you for being with us and thank you for sharing the time, and again, we welcome your guests and we wish them well."

Wes Maynard:

"Thank you very much."